



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

In Memoriam

WILLIAM NEWTON CLARKE

SHAILER MATHEWS
The University of Chicago

The death of William Newton Clarke has removed the most interesting and possibly the most typical member of that little group of men who have enabled so many Protestant clergymen of America and Great Britain to pass from the older to the newer point of view in evangelical theology. During his term as professor at Colgate University Professor Clarke's health did not permit him to participate widely in public tasks, but for this very reason he became even more the prophet of Protestant Romanticism. Like Wordsworth, he dwelt apart from men, detached from the incidents of theological struggles as well as from those important social duties which assail men of more active relations. His theology has in it the serenity of the beautiful valley over which he looked as he thought and worked. He knew what it was to lose the confidence of timid and obscurantist souls and to be subjected to the criticism of those who never quite lost his friendship; but he was spared many of those temptations proposed by theological controversy to take short cuts to theological conclusions. His theology has little of the adventurous or the belligerent spirit of youth, his *Outlines* being published after he was fifty-seven years of age.

The fact that he did not publish much during the years of transition which he has described so frankly in his little volume *Sixty Years with the Bible* accounts in large measure for the quality of his theological work. His volumes are not of a class with the work of men who are either searching for new truth, or who, having discovered it, are seeking to vindicate their new allegiance. Investigation in the technical sense of the word is almost absent in them. I doubt if there is a single footnote in all of his volumes. That he thought deeply and read broadly is constantly in evidence,

but that he made any effort to follow the various currents of religious philosophy or the progress of technical biblical criticism or even the varying schools of theology, his volumes give us no clear evidence. He was not a pioneer, and open-minded though he was, he gave no indication of sympathy with men who, possessed of a less untroubled faith than his, challenged those beliefs which to him were presuppositions.

His theology is singularly personal. There is in his volumes something of that mature wisdom which is one of the perquisites of a vigorous and intellectual maturity. One can never understand fully his *Outlines of Theology* and his volume on *The Christian Doctrine of God* until after reading the little autobiographical volume to which reference has been made. Then the entire situation is plain. Dr. Clarke inherited an orthodoxy which he never abandoned, but which he humanized and, one is almost tempted to say, christianized. With all his open-mindedness and genuine sympathy with theological science, he never developed a new theological technique or modified the primacy accorded by orthodoxy to the Bible. He did abandon, however, the scholastic doctrine of inspiration and came to see that only those contents of the Bible could be used for a Christian theology which are consonant with the heart of Christ. But if his volumes leave us no record of any change in method, they are brimming over with evidences of a change in spirit. In his earlier days he tells us that he tried to answer Herbert Spencer with quotations from the Scriptures, but in his later days he set forth with sweet eloquence the ideals of Jesus himself, in full sympathy with evolutionary thought. As German humanism passed through Luther's religious experience to produce Lutheranism, so orthodoxy passed through the experience of Dr. Clarke to become a message of religion. One can trace with considerable clearness the progress of his denaturizing of orthodoxy. The essence of orthodoxy is its submission to supernatural authority expressed either in the decrees of the church or in the Scripture. Protestant as well as Roman Catholic orthodoxy has accepted the great mass of material inherited from Augustine and the ecumenical councils, and has used this material as the standard for interpreting the Scripture.

Dr. Clarke ceased to appeal to this supernaturalism in so far as it concerned the Scriptures, but never rejected supernaturalism as furnishing the content of a theological system. There is little in either of his two main volumes that is not either a restatement or a revaluation of an inherited orthodoxy. His doctrine of God, for example, is orthodoxy, but it is orthodoxy cleared of such characteristics as make it inhospitable to modern thought; Dr. Clarke is a Trinitarian, but in his treatment of the doctrine of God there is nothing to show the method by which Trinitarianism arose from, and satisfied the religious needs of, the social mind by which it was formulated; but there is a facile reinterpretation of the Nicene formula into harmony with modern ideas. His doctrine of man is all but unaffected by an avowed belief in evolution. He is cautious about affirming the literalness of the biblical account of the fall, yet holds to the corruption of human stock through the race, although he refuses to believe that this corruption involves guilt. The two pages given in his *Outlines* to this important matter can hardly meet with the approval either of a thoroughgoing Augustinian, or of a modern anthropologist, yet it is orthodoxy with its disagreeable qualities removed, and its profoundly religious and moral character manifested. Here, as in his treatment of the Trinity, Dr. Clarke shows extraordinary power to write religiously about theological matters.

Speaking generally, the material for his theology he found in the Bible. It is true that formally he declares that theology finds its subject-matter in religion, but he never makes a comparative study of religious experience. One might almost say that just as the Roman Catholic church demands that the Bible be interpreted in accordance with the decisions of the Fathers, so Dr. Clarke uses the Bible as interpreted by his own deep religious experience. He himself would certainly have been the first to deny such an autobiographical element in his theology and would doubtless prefer to sum up his method as the use of scriptural elements "in the light of the large truths that Christ has contributed to human thought." But as a matter of fact, his system is a religious interpretation of theology rather than a theological interpretation of religion.

His system centers about Christ, but the problems which the modern world finds in the life of Christ he almost never mentions. He accepts the supernatural birth of Jesus without calling it the virgin birth, and holds that Jesus' relation to God was unique and that he worked miracles. But he declines to face the real problem raised by the use of the word "miracle" and leaves the issue in such shape that both the conservative and the progressive find in his treatment partial agreement with themselves. As regards the incarnation he holds to the presence of humanity and divinity in Christ and follows a line of thought which, except to the technically trained theologian, would seem hardly unlike the ordinary orthodox presentation. But here again the old problems which gave rise to orthodoxy are not distinctly faced and the formula finally reached is more homiletic than scientific. His method of treating this highly important point is so characteristic that I venture to quote it at length. The technical reader will be interested in observing how an evangelical impression is made by an anthology of Christological heresies.

Holding the doctrine of supernatural birth, we find it most simple and natural to think of the humanity of Christ in such a way as this: that the Logos provided his spirit, and formed the material of normal humanity so far as the spirit is concerned; and that his humanity further consisted, outwardly, in his possession of a human body and human relations, and, inwardly and more significantly, in the human limitations that restricted the action of that divine which constituted his spirit. He was divine in spiritual nature, and human in range of life and action, and hence in experience. The spirit that constituted the personality of Christ was divine: the fact that that spirit was living within human limits, spiritual as well as physical, rendered the personality human.

According to this view Jesus was not such a human being as human parents could bring into existence, but, by virtue of being divine, was the normal and ideal man; for surely God, coming into human personality, would constitute a man. He was not only more divine but more human than any other; for the normal and ideal man is most human of all. This view shows why Jesus did not inherit human depravity, and was not born to human sinfulness. Instead of being produced out of the vitiated common stock, his humanity was divine, initiated by divine act, constituted by divine indwelling. It was a clean humanity because it was a divine humanity.

This view avoids all questions about double consciousness and will; it

shows a single personality, neither wholly divine nor wholly human in consciousness, but partaking in both qualities: it shows why Jesus differed in consciousness from ordinary men, and why from God unincarnate; it relieves us of all question about his acting now as God and now as man; it makes his sinlessness seem reasonable. It does not solve all the difficulties in the case, but it solves more than other views, and corresponds reasonably well to the conditions that we find in the Scriptures.

Yet it would not be true to say that Dr. Clarke's work lacked originality. On the contrary, it abounds in originality. Only it is the originality of experience and conviction rather than that of hypothesis. He never sought so much new truth as he did new applications and new presentations of old truths. Of the empirical method in theology he apparently had no thought. The epistemological questions which lie below theology, and the historical questions concerning Jesus which are now so much to the forefront, he never treated. Of the problems in historical evaluation forced upon the theologian by studies of comparative religion in general and of the apocalyptic literature of Judaism in particular, of questions of method in the use of the experience of Jesus and of the Christian church, of the nature of assurance as affected by the rise of pragmatism and other new philosophies, of all these subjects we find no mention. But we find none the less something which for the non-technical reader is quite as valuable, possibly more valuable, and that is the mature convictions of an open-minded, profoundly religious man regarding the great structure of orthodoxy for which Protestantism stands. Dr. Clarke has saved the faith of many a man sorely beset by a new scientific thinking, and his salvation was accomplished, not by argument, but by an exposition of the heart of Christian truth expressed in beautiful literary form and with the warmth of real religious conviction. Whatever may be the theology of the future, however much its method must be changed and its problems redefined, the service rendered by Dr. Clarke will never be outlived, for he not only freed the spirit of orthodoxy from its scholastic wrappings, but he also enabled men to hold courageously to that spirit while turning their faces to the exigent problems which Dr. Clarke himself did not attempt to answer.